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House of Representatives

Statement of Congressman Ron Kind

H.Con.Res. 393 - Budget Resolution for FY05

March 25, 2004

Mr. Chairman, the President and majority party in Congress have presented budgets that continue down the path of fiscal recklessness and misplaced priorities. Their plan continues to fail working families, continues to fail seniors, continues to fail veterans, and continues to fail children by expanding already record deficits that will hamper economic growth and burden future generations.

Perhaps most disturbing is that the majority has no plan to return the federal government's books to balance. While they claim that their budget plan will cut in half the current record deficits that their

economic policies helped create, realistic projections, including pages in the President's own budget, show deficits as far as the eye can see under their plan.

Their plan continues the downward fiscal spiral of our government at exactly the wrong moment in our nation's history when we have 80 million baby boomers rapidly approaching retirement age and starting to enter the Social Security and Medicare systems. Instead of the irresponsible budget before us, we should be trying to practice fiscal discipline to get the nation on sound fiscal footing in anticipation of that demographic time

bomb going off and protect the monies in the Social Security and Medicare trust funds. This requires making tough choices on spending and revenue, and it requires us to move away from the status quo toward a new plan that helps working families, meets the security needs of our country, protects important programs here at home, and finds balance within a specified time frame.

The alternative budget proposal offered by Mr. Spratt meets this challenge and sets a new course toward fiscal sanity. It includes more funding for programs important to people in western Wisconsin such

as education, veterans' health care, environmental protection, and first responders. It fully funds our national defense, and provides necessary tax relief for working families. By reducing a portion of the individual tax cuts for those making over \$500,000 yearly income, the Spratt alternative provides working families relief from the marriage penalty tax and extends the child tax credit.

In addition, the Democratic alternative returns the federal budget to balance in eight years – something the Republican budget never does. It supports important budget enforcement measures that were present in the 1990's and kept government on track to record surpluses. The

Republican leadership has continually refused to reinstate these important, common sense enforcement tools that simply require offsets for spending and revenue changes in law that would otherwise increase the budget deficit. These so-called "pay-as-you-go" provisions require government to pay its bills and stop the fiscal bleeding.

Budgets are all about priorities. The alternative budget proposal I support makes education a priority by providing \$51.4 billion more than the President's budget over 10 years, helping local school districts meet the requirements of No Child Left Behind and making college more affordable for all students. It makes veterans health care a

priority by providing \$6.6 billion more than the majority over five years, meeting the request of the Veterans' Affairs Committee and veterans' organizations. And it makes jobs creation and worker training a priority while providing tax relief for working families.

Let us pass a sensible, fiscally responsible budget that protects important American values so that years from now, we can look back and say, yes, we had to make some tough decisions, but they were the right decisions under the right circumstances, and American families are the primary beneficiaries as a consequence. I urge my colleagues' support of the Democratic alternative.